



Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee

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56th Montana Legislature

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The Honorable Governor Marc Racicot
State Capitol
Helena MT 59620

Dear Governor Racicot:

On August 17, 2000, the Children and Families, Health, and Human Services Legislative Interim Committee received the Montana Dental Action Plan from the Montana Dental Access Coalition. The Committee has supported and participated in the activities of the Coalition and wishes to make recommendations to you based on this work.

The Committee has endorsed the Department of Public Health and Human Services original budget request for a dental funding increase and rebase that would raise the Medicaid dental aggregate reimbursement to 85 percent of the usual and customary charges. Montanans, especially those who are eligible for Medicaid, are facing a crisis in access to dental care. Although raising reimbursement rates will not resolve the crisis in itself, it will go a long way to stabilizing access to the dental providers who serve Medicaid patients and to increasing access.

The Committee has also endorsed the Commissioner of Higher Education's budget request to increase the funding of dental opportunities for Montana students in the WICHE and University of Minnesota dentistry schools by three slots each year. It is vital that access to dental providers for the future be addressed as the current dental providers age and head towards retirement. Increasing access to these educational opportunities will provide assistance to Montanans who seek to join the dental profession and provide dental care in the future.

In the final stages of the preparation of your budget for presentation to the 2001 Legislature, please consider our endorsement of these budget requests and support them. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Senator Mignon Waterman, Presiding Officer

cc: Laurie Ekanger, Director, Department of Public Health and Human Services

Richard A. Crofts, Commissioner of Higher Education
Cheri Seed, State Dental Health Consultant, DPHHS

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